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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

NATO'S ROLE IN A BERLIN CRISIS:
AUTOMATIC OR SELECTIVE?

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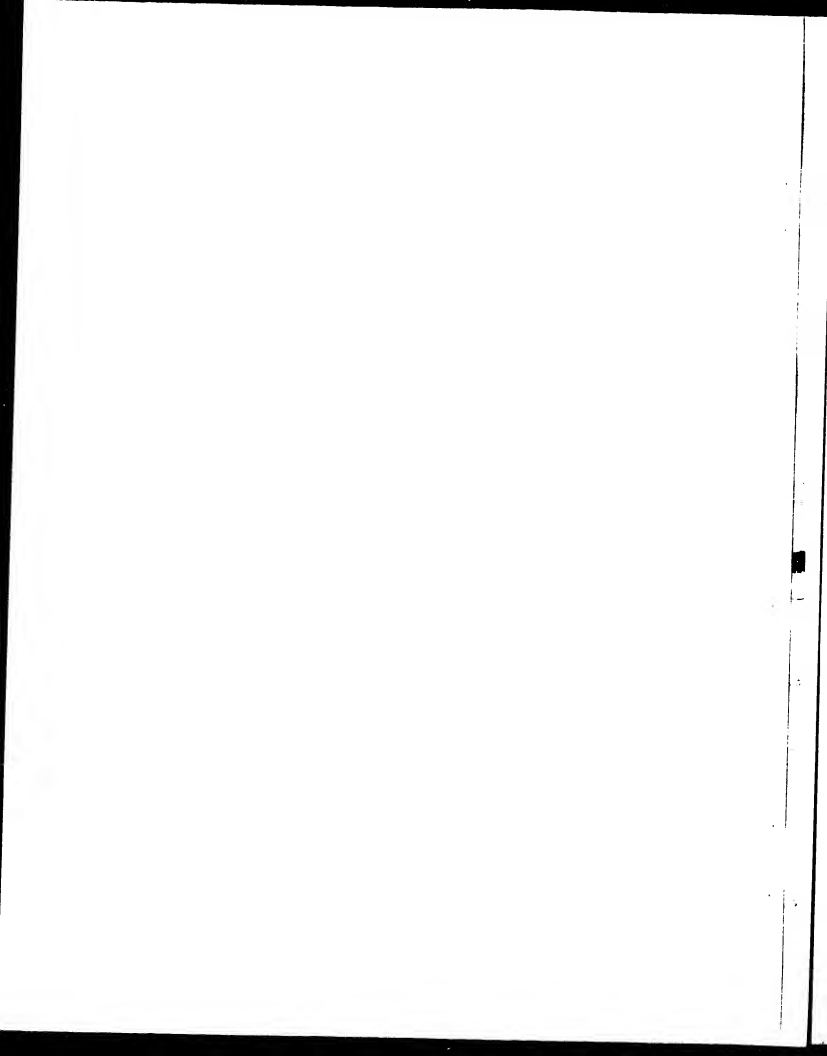
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PREFACE

The following Memorandum is neither a fully documented research study nor a purely theoretical dissertation. It can probably be best described as a speculative exercise designed to stimulate ideas (and hopefully, agreement) in an area of strategic thought where diverse and rather abstract views now prevail.

The study has been prepared as a contribution to RAND's work on the Berlin problem undertaken for the U.S. Air Force.



SUMMARY

The perceptible evolution in American strategic thinking toward a policy of graduated response to different degrees of provocation in Europe does not appear to have been accompanied by any clear view of how a restrained campaign might be conducted. The present paper investigates one component aspect of this limited war conception -- the elemental question of what Western powers should actively engage in the fighting.

If NATO intervenes in a Berlin crisis as a corporate entity against a single Soviet-bloc state like East Germany, we must expect that Moscow will invoke the Warsaw Pact. Given the known Soviet propensity to probe for weak spots in the NATO flank regions, we can almost predict that the Communists would not allow outlying NATO countries to become belligerents without launching direct reprisal attacks against the homelands of these weaker members of the alliance. The question therefore arises, assuming that war can be limited in Europe, whether it would be in the interests of NATO for a conflict of limited intensity to spread beyond the smallest area to which it can in practice be confined. In other words, should the NATO powers of their own volition engage the full alliance at the start, or should they rely

instead on selected protagonists such as the Occupying Powers or some other ad hoc coalition?

In general war, where the outcome hinges on the strategic nuclear campaign, all European nations could make valuable contributions through their early warning and air defense networks, their forward strike bases for aircraft and missiles, and their diversionary undertakings. Defense shortcomings of the individual nations would be submerged by the transcendent importance of the strategic effort. However, for a limited war, many European nations become less attractive combatant partners. Their facilities for assisting in the strategic campaign are not required; their self-defense tasks generally exceed the indigenous military potential; and they could contribute more in the way of material aid while remaining benevolent neutrals than they could as active belligerents. The most efficient Western combatant consortium would consist of France, West Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (hereafter designated the four major allies).

Some psychological stimulation would accrue from a NATO-wide endeavor, but this asset would be more than offset by the difficulty of securing unanimous agreement to a progressive policy in the grand coalition. Then, too, more

belligerents would multiply the chances for escalation and complicate negotiations between opposing blocs.

Any Western fighting coalition would need the established NATO headquarters staffs, facilities and communications networks in order to fight a controlled military campaign. But there is no apparent reason why the existing nerve system could not be expropriated by expeditionary troops of the four major allies, leaving the residual NATO forces in reserve under the control of a skeleton standby command organization.

If faced with a losing conventional situation around Berlin, the four major allies might find it imperative to increase the intensity of their activities. But their escalation, if necessary, should be pointed rationally in the direction of strength. Bringing in the entire aggregation of weak allies would contribute little usable power, but would add many strategic deficiencies. More productive pressure could be applied, still in the local area, by using more powerful weapons, additional troops, or novel tactics.

Many strategists argue that the West would be vulnerable to surprise Soviet escalation tactics if we initially confined our operations to the four major allies. However, if the war cannot be permanently limited, NATO's defensive

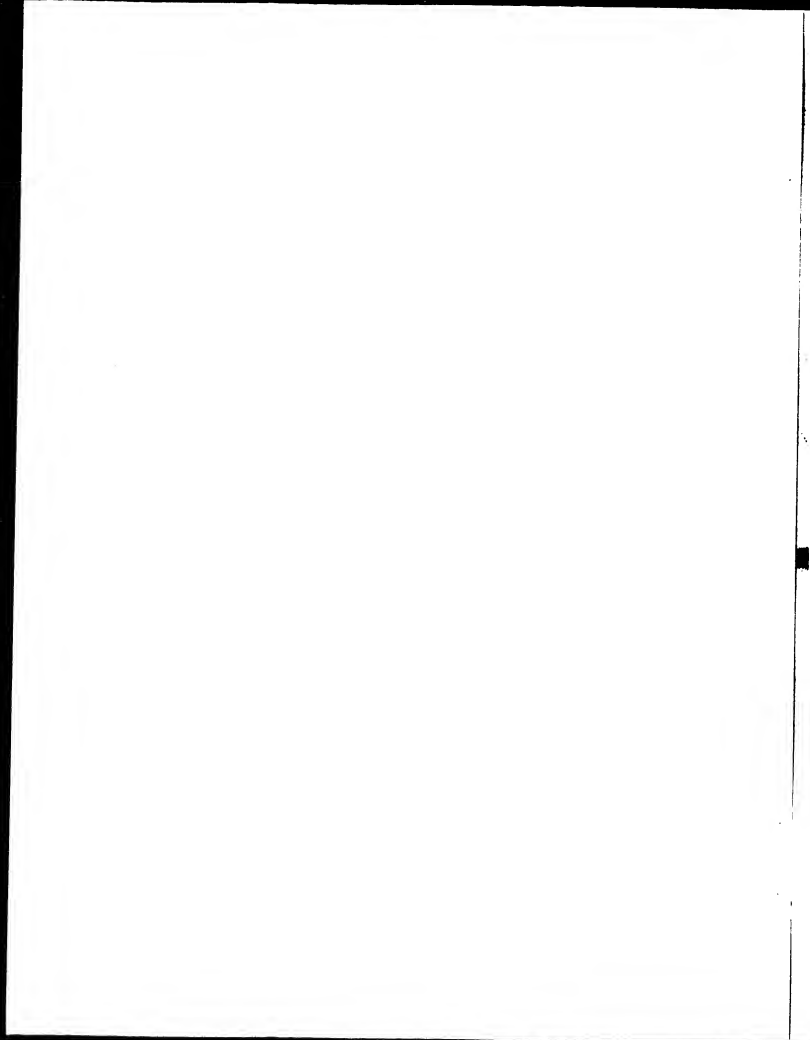
predicament seems little affected by who expands the region of conflict -- the allies will be inferior on the flanks under any opening conditions.

The most potent argument against only partial alliance reaction is the charge that a knowledge of our intentions would cause the Soviets to discount our resolve to retaliate. The complaint would be decisive if the West still adhered to a policy of deterrence solely through massive retaliation. But it loses cogency if we have already implied a willingness to fight conventionally until "in danger of being overrun." The Soviets will be deterred primarily by concern about the power and probability of Western strategic reprisal -- not by our local tactics. The specter of SAC would loom just as menacingly over a small war around Berlin as it would over a more widespread conventional campaign.

A limited war in Europe retains a greater chance of remaining within bounds if both sides: (1) earnestly want to keep it controlled; (2) have taken precautions to do so; and (3) have communicated to the opponents their intention to fight in a restrained manner. Assuming we would want to keep the war limited, then both our political and military contingency plans must be flexible enough to allow us a choice between the all-NATO response and the partial reaction.

Preparations for operating as a select group of combatants should not be concealed, even though their disclosure might conflict with the present emphasis on NATO solidarity. Contradictory indicators do not necessarily cancel themselves out in the Soviet evaluator's mind. They could complicate his analysis by suggesting the possibility of either a partial or a total countermove by the West. The United States' reputation for inconsistency might be turned to good advantage.

A policy of relying on an ad hoc Western fighting team will need further investigation before it can be recommended as the preferred Western strategy. The operational, logistical, and political difficulties are obvious, but not insurmountable. The main thing is to recognize that corporate NATO action is not the only way open to the West for meeting local aggression. Alternatives exist, and they should be explored before we are confronted with a new emergency.



CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
Section	
I. THE SETTING NO ONE CARES TO PROPHECY	1
II. DO WE ALWAYS WANT AN AUTOMATIC RESPONSE FROM THE FULL ALLIANCE?	7
III. THE EFFECT OF ALLIED GROUPINGS ON THE CONTROL PROBLEM	17
IV. SOVIET OPTIONS, AND THE RESULTING POWER CONFRONTATIONS	21
V. MILITARY EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL COMBATANTS .	31
VI. NONMILITARY CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING THE NUMBER OF COMBATANTS	39
VII. THE TERRITORIAL LIMITATION AS IT IS AFFECTED BY OTHER ASPECTS OF CONFLICT CONTROL	49
VIII. SOME OBJECTIONS ANTICIPATED	55
IX. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS	65

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I. THE SETTING NO ONE CARES TO PROPHECY

The Berlin dispute will not disappear of its own accord. Recognizing that the present lull may represent merely a breathing space, we must look to our plans for acting in a regenerated crisis. This study concentrates on one aspect of our plans which should be considered in somber anticipation that conditions will again deteriorate. An effort is made to answer the question: what is the best combination of Western powers to take up the cudgel if the Berlin crisis should deepen into actual hostilities -- either by accident or by design? Though the matter of preferred combatants may have been decided in the past, it now seems to require reappraisal. Evidence abounds to substantiate the metamorphosis that has taken place in U.S. attitudes during the past eighteen months. With regard to Soviet provocation in Europe, officials now talk of exerting a "sizable conventional effort" before using nuclear weapons. Presumably, too, atomic weapons would at first be used in a restrained manner. Although these ideas seem to be accepted now as basic premises, one encounters widespread differences of opinion about how to conduct a less-than-maximum campaign.

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In spite of high-level opinion, many officials simply do not believe war in Europe could be controlled. More significant, the divergencies within the school of thought that believes hostilities can be limited reveal the multitude of conflicting issues which must be resolved before the policy enunciated will have been translated into usable plans and preparations. Such a transition does not take place by decree; it will never proceed smoothly and without disagreement; it feeds on analysis, hypothesis, argumentation, experimentation, discussion, and -- occasionally -- adjudication.

Anyone who wants to consider the details of a hypothetical limited war in Europe must construct his own setting. The assumed background will represent at best an educated guess, and we would be blind indeed to pin all our plans on one set of conditions. Strategists should not impose rigid environmental assumptions upon the planners, but should seek to identify patterns of action or response which might apply to entire families of incidents. Within the limits of this proviso, they should perhaps abbreviate their scenarios so as to focus attention on the main thesis.

A new Berlin crisis could flare up in a number of ways: deliberate Soviet provocation, irresponsible East German

conduct, an incident at Check Point Charlie, a mob demonstration which gets out of hand, and so on. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that some unspecified incident has occurred and that Soviet action (or reaction) has fractured the allied lines of access to Berlin. A Western countermove aimed at reopening the routes has been set in motion and will generate a military clash between forces of the two blocs. In so far as Allied grand strategy attempts to secure its objectives by suasion, the most telling element of the counteroffensive, no doubt, will be the threat of strategic nuclear attack. This study, however, focuses exclusively on the local situation.

The local Western planning staff are now faced with formulating a plan of action for the tactical response. But who are these planners? Are they the regular NATO planning staff, representatives of the Occupying Powers, or designated planners of still another ad hoc assemblage? Faced with the situation just outlined, do the Western powers attempt to invoke the NATO charter¹ and call for

¹West Berlin has never been designated NATO "territory." However, Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty reads: "...an armed attack...is deemed to include an armed attack...on the occupation forces of any Party in Europe..." Lord Ismay, NATO: The First Five Years, Bosch-Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1955, p. 18. The eligibility of

corporate action, or do the Occupying Powers (possibly with other partners of their choice) operate as the Western protagonists? The average respondent will answer that he cannot decide whom he wants on his side until he knows the objective of the struggle, its geographical boundaries, the prescribed weapons restrictions, and many other things. From a scientific standpoint one would be justified in thus withholding judgment until the over-all picture had been filled in with sufficient detail. But in practice decision-makers must make their decisions long before all the evidence is in, and they can seldom hope to possess in advance adequate information on tangential matters.

Would it not be best to study now some important aspects of limited war in Europe, even in the absence of an agreed scenario? We can expect, once a number of independent studies have been produced, that they will begin to dovetail, and that we may be able to recognize a pattern. We may not be able to state with assurance what active allies we would want in a given situation until after we have selected our objective; but, by the same token, we cannot properly define the

a Berlin incident for a concerted NATO response would obviously depend on whether members considered that the occupying garrison had been "attacked." One could infer from NATO Council resolutions since 1955 that the alliance is disposed toward a broad, rather than a literal, interpretation of this commitment. (See p. 63.)

objective until we have a "feel" for what allied cooperation we expect or want.

To "limit" war requires mutual self-control on the part of the belligerents. Students of the subject speak of four prominent areas of restriction: (1) objective, (2) method of fighting, (3) level of violence, and (4) physical boundaries.² We must note that the area of our immediate interest -- limitation of the number of participants -- is not usually accorded prime importance among the restrictions essential in controlling the scale of war, though it obviously relates to (4), "physical boundaries."

As a start, let us assign to each of the above types of restrictions the following values, which are intended to represent the realistic minimums. (1) The allied objective will be primarily to re-establish de facto communication with Berlin. (To aim at obtaining legal guarantees for access would raise the stakes.) (2) Allied plans for local operations will prescribe the most austere

²The terminology used here is extracted from an historical analysis by Harvey DeWeerd. Other authors use different phraseology, for example, Nitze suggests "sanctuaries" for "physical boundaries." His "intensity" -- Bernard Brodie's "means" -- appears to combine "method of fighting" and "level of violence." Harvey DeWeerd, Concepts of Limited War: An Historical Approach, The RAND Corporation, P-2352, November 1961, p. 9.

forces and the most restrained tactics consistent with achieving the objective. (3) The allies will seek to keep the level of violence low. (4) The allies will attempt to confine hostilities to the smallest possible geographical region (preferably to East Germany and the corridors to Berlin). What if it becomes necessary to exceed these minimums to avoid defeat? What if we should wish to use nuclear weapons? These possibilities will be taken up after we have considered the prior question as to whether we want to recruit all the NATO allies. (See Section VII, pp. 50-52.)

II. DO WE ALWAYS WANT AN AUTOMATIC RESPONSE
FROM THE FULL ALLIANCE?

To many, an investigation of who should fight will appear superfluous. We have already cast our lot in Europe with NATO and we are thoroughly committed to a specific group of nations. Since NATO -- the cornerstone of our system of collective defense -- has recently completed its first decade with flying colors, it may seem odd now to question arrangements which have been in effect so long and which seem to have fulfilled their purpose. It should be explained that there is no intention to challenge NATO's past or future value as a rallying point for the Free World effort. But is the present system of NATO commitments the best one for controlling the scale of war in Europe -- particularly a war over Europe's most explosive locality, Berlin?

Remarkable as NATO's peacetime accomplishments have been, one cannot precisely assess its military value until hostilities commence. By that time it will be too late to mend fences. Consequently we are bound to speculate, amid the many uncertainties of peacetime, about how NATO would perform in various wartime situations.

Until recently, a theoretical appraisal of the wartime effectiveness of the NATO alliance in the defense of Europe

would have been a gruesome and unpleasant task -- but relatively uncomplicated. Western strategy visualized only general war: one dominated by the massive nuclear exchange. In theory, whichever side won this vital contest would ultimately emerge victorious. Other opening land, naval, and air campaigns were important but not critical, because victory in the nuclear campaign would cancel out or reduce the effect of other losses. The primary wartime task of the theater forces was to hold off the enemy for a short period until the devastating strategic campaign could take its toll on the front lines.³ In this vision of World War III, each European nation had its part to play, no matter how small, and the NATO machinery provided a most useful means of co-ordinating the combined effort.

The strategic kaleidoscope has now rotated, bringing into display new colors and shapes. Paradoxically, the emergence of the Soviet Union as a nuclear colossus has dictated that General Norstad's troops of Allied Command Europe (ACE) be elevated to the role of an important and distinct element of the Western military armory. At the same time, following a shift in strategic thought, it is

³General Lauris Norstad, NATO Monthly Letter, Vol. 5, No. 12, December 1957.

the intention to withhold nuclear weapons until the ground forces are in danger of being overrun. Incidentally, this constitutes one of the few solid tenets in our morass of policy uncertainty. The author would emphasize that he is neither advocating limited war in Europe, nor even predicting that war could be controlled if we wished it. He asserts merely that the mutation in policy which has taken place in the past year or so in Western councils raises attendant questions about how the NATO alliance should operate.

The thought that a change in strategy might induce a change in our attitude of reliance on NATO will strike many as a non sequitur. They regard an alliance as continuously binding on all parties as long as it is in effect. If an alliance is in force, they argue, it should be used. Commentators, while arguing vigorously over whether or not a conventional war in Europe would be disastrous for the West, seem to have accepted without challenge that NATO should automatically participate as a whole in any hostilities that occur in Europe, whatever the circumstances.

The desire to present a united front arises instinctively. But adherence to a coalition in war brings with it mixed blessings. In certain circumstances, the disadvantages loom larger than in others, but they can never

be casually dismissed. Let us survey some of the pros and cons connected with reliance upon full NATO participation in limited war situations arising out of a Berlin crisis.

One glaring weakness has riveted the attention of NATO critics since the coalition was formalized: the loose language of the treaty provides no assurance that NATO will ever respond as an entity. Defenders of the pact, on the other hand, have asserted that individual nations will spring to arms unhesitatingly in case of unambiguous aggression against one of their allies. No doubt the nature of the provocation -- ambiguous or blatant -- will largely determine the allies' reaction. But undeniably loopholes in the treaty could allow less resolute allies to sit on the sidelines if they so wished -- even in the face of wanton aggression. This deficiency creates a hazard to full dependence on alliance solidarity in a crisis. Before condemning this weakness, however, we should first decide whether we actually want the full alliance to be activated mechanically in every crisis. The doubt about whether we really want this arises from the growth of the belief that it might be in the Western interest to keep a war in Europe limited.

Before deciding whether we want the smaller allies to rush to our assistance we should compare their potential contributions to limited war with those to general war. Norway, for example, would bring to the coalition certain incomparable resources for the general war struggle. In general war, the cardinal objective is the speedy destruction of targets in the Soviet heartland, and Norway furnishes a most attractive forward base area from which to project attacks. Defensively, her position athwart some of the routes from launching bases in the northern USSR to targets in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. provides an opportunity for early warning and air defense activity that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. Norway also provides bases from which to interdict the northern Soviet port complex through an antisubmarine and countershipping campaign.

Norway, as a general war ally, would create some problems as well. Her citizens and officials would undoubtedly insist on an augmentation of the meager indigenous air defense. More concern would be focused on her long, rugged coastline. The almost total lack of interior roads or railroads north of Bodo precludes effective land defense of the northern littoral. In general war, however, one

can hope that the critical phase would have been settled long before the Soviet Union could exploit a foothold on Norwegian soil.

In a limited war, on the other hand, the disadvantages of Norway are magnified and the advantages become less important. The vast undefendable stretches of coast offer inviting targets for Soviet incursions. The allies would have to eject the invaders by local operations, but Norway's scant military force would be completely inadequate for the task. Since, in a limited war, the Soviet Union proper would undoubtedly be a sanctuary, the value of Norway as a base area for air strikes would be nullified. While air defense and antisubmarine activities might play a vital role in limited war, Norway would require outside naval and air aid to fulfill her responsibilities in these areas.

In short, in the context of limited war Norway looks like a much less desirable ally than she does in a general war situation. Norway probably presents the extreme example of such a contrast because of the great discrepancy between the size of her army and the territory she must defend. Each of the smaller allies, however, has its own peculiar value as a limited war partner.

Some people think in terms of a wholesale NATO response, involving the smaller allies because they visualize only general war. The proponents of counterforce -- those who would place primary reliance on a U.S. strategic war-fighting capability -- are skeptical of attempts to control the violence of war. In their opinion, limitations are unworkable and may encourage minor enemy aggressions that could lead sooner or later to all-out war.

At the same time, the advocate of "collective defense" resists what he regards as an attempt to undercut his premise that our security requires the mobilization of all the resources of the Western Bloc. Instinctively, the believers in collective defense oppose any modification of the assumptions behind the present alliance organization. "I ask you," one of them said, "what use is the alliance if, when the going gets tough, we deliberately bypass it?"

True, it appears unreasonable on the surface to conduct a campaign that excludes some of the long-time friends whose adherence to the common cause has cost us dearly through the years. But is it really so illogical? Is not the unqualified policy of collective defense a little like insisting that a coach use every player on his roster even though some are below the team standard and would lower the composite effectiveness?

Some have argued that we must plan to use the entire alliance because the swift pace of modern war will not allow delay in the composition of the fighting coalition. This argument is valid for general war, and it is here acknowledged that the NATO alliance should respond in toto to that type of conflict. No doubt, furthermore, the alliance can perform most effectively as a unit in the Cold War.⁴ The argument of this study is confined to the contingency of local war in Europe.

It should not seem strange that we suggest applying different criteria for selecting active partners in a limited war than we would apply in a general war. In other enterprises, military or civil, we would expect a director to choose his associates carefully according to the type of undertaking that confronts him. Consider the simple analogy of the patrol leader preparing for an assignment. If his task requires breaching the enemy line or defending a strong point, he may concentrate on numerical strength, give little thought to quality, and be reluctant to reject

⁴Not all commentators concede this point. Paul L. Peeters, a Belgian-American scholar, in arguing for less binding peacetime NATO ties, remarks: "There would be a superb new quality of strength for the West in an alliance whose members followed their own courses of action in a number of areas." "NATO Must Be Born Again," Air Force Magazine, December 1961.

any usable rifleman. If, however, he is involved in a more delicate assignment, such as a stealthy patrol behind the enemy lines, he will weed out the clumsy, the weak, the timid, and the impetuous. He will prefer those who can contribute to the firepower of his task force without injecting weaknesses to jeopardize the success of his mission.

Western military authorities might do well to make similar distinctions when forming international fighting teams for general and limited war.⁵ In general war success depends on usable strength-in-being and the rapid prosecution of the strategic nuclear offensive. All European nations could help in some manner, even if their out-manned

⁵If nothing else, a discussion of this topic between soldiers and diplomats could preclude some potential misunderstandings. It is not enough for the statesman to know only that the generals desire certain allies; he must know just how intensely the military wants each partner. Furthermore, the need should be reappraised with every significant change of conditions. Overzealous U.S. solicitation of Russian assistance against Japan at the end of World War II illustrates the point. We gained nothing, but lost at least in political flexibility, by bidding for an ally we did not really need or want. Incidentally, the diplomat-soldier relationship works both ways. Military strategists ought not placidly to accept the assurance that certain allies should be taken aboard for amorphous "political reasons."

forces could not long withstand the Red onslaught. All the European allies provide forward staging bases, potential or actual, for nuclear delivery forces, and they maintain early-warning and air-defense systems whose efficacy depends in large measure on total participation. Their local activities assist the strategic offensive by destroying Soviet defense forces and by diverting Soviet effort.

Limited war, however, presents a different frame of reference.

III. THE EFFECT OF ALLIED GROUPINGS
ON THE CONTROL PROBLEM

Strategists, in their desire to "win" a limited war, must not overlook the need to "control" it as well. In this regard, we know too little about alliance behavior under stress. Historical parallels must be warped to fit the conditions created by the ever-present nuclear peril. Theoretical investigations have been fragmentary. One factor, however, seems almost axiomatic: the larger a coalition, the less control will it have over actions that might lead to escalation. The larger the Soviet and Western coalitions, too, the more difficulty will they experience in communicating and negotiating with one another.

The make-up of any particular allied fighting group will influence the opponent's conduct. In the Korean War, the likelihood of Soviet participation formed the great unknown factor in initial American plans for conducting the war. Washington heaved a sigh of relief when it received a brusque memorandum from the USSR rejecting the U.S. suggestion that the Soviet Union use its good offices to persuade the North Koreans to withdraw. Policy-makers were reassured because they inferred from the note and other indicators that the Soviet Union would not intervene

as a combatant.⁶ No one can state confidently what turn events would have taken had the Soviet Union entered the contest, but from what we know of U.S. preparations and attitudes, we can conclude that our response would not have been confined to Korea. Later, the belligerent status of Red China became the transcendent issue. As General MacArthur put it when the Chicomos crossed the Yalu, they had ushered in a "new war." Hence the Supreme Commander urged a mighty increase in the scope of the American prosecution of the war. Clearly, our war plans for that limited war -- the most complete prototype available -- were contingent upon what nations constituted the opposition.

More recently, in Southeast Asia, Peiping has warned that the intervention of SEATO in Laos or Vietnam would force Red China to enter the fray. The entire complexion of a limited war can be altered by a change in the grouping of contestants on one side. The use of every available ally may increase the force which can be brought to bear on the enemy; but this strategy also increases the scale of the war from the start, perhaps beyond the point necessary to gain one's political objectives, and makes escalation

⁶Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1956, p. 342.

toward all-out warfare all the more dangerous. Hence, the planner cannot be content to weigh the purely military contributions that each ally would make to his side. He must also consider the enemy's probable reaction to the belligerent status of all his country's allies in the area from the start, and the military balance that would result from this reaction. The matter of probable enemy reaction constitutes a perpetual riddle for the limited war planner. The questions in limited war are whether the use of any measure is a good risk considering what the other side is likely to do in retaliation and whether a consequent expansion in the intensity or scale of the conflict presages a net gain or loss in relation to our objectives. The dilemma epitomized here is twofold. It embraces, first, the uncertainty about whether the enemy will increase his efforts in response to our enlargement of the scale of conflict. A cautious opponent may choose to consider our maneuver as a legitimate response and be willing to accept it. Perhaps he can find no suitable countermove that will not intensify hostilities to a degree he deems dangerous. The second part of the dilemma concerns our uncertainty about the nature of the enemy's countermeasure, and about how it will affect the tactical balance. The latter

problem far overshadows the former in complexity, although they may be of equal importance and inscrutability. In a given limited-war context, then, two questions demand answers: will the enemy increase his efforts; and, if so, in what direction?

IV. SOVIET OPTIONS, AND THE RESULTING POWER CONFRONTATIONS

Let us now return to the context of a future Berlin crisis. The Soviet Union, one may safely assume, could not stand idly by and allow a formal NATO action against the German Democratic Republic alone. A notion persists that we can repeat the Korean experience wherein the United Nations as a whole formally opposed the North Korean aggressors, while only those UN members who wished to fight sent military expeditions to the battle. It is dangerous to seek analogies in dissimilar situations. Neither North Korea nor Red China had the capacity to punish its enemies, whose metropolitan centers were far away, except on the local battlefield. But in a case where NATO was involved over Berlin the minor alliance members would all be weak countries close to the Soviet bloc. Furthermore, they contain some attractive prizes (e.g., the Turkish Straits). The advantages of a plan whereby those NATO members who wish to fight can do so, while the others remain nonbelligerent, must be weighed against the risk that united military action would encourage the Soviet Union to lash out for coveted objectives in regions where they hold a tactical advantage.

The formal involvement of the Warsaw Pact organization will be of less concern to the West than the actual extent of military activity on the part of the various pact signatories. Even if NATO limits the number of its belligerent members, Moscow may feel constrained to invoke the Pact. Should the Communists decide to attack in regions distant from Germany, it requires little imagination to guess some of their immediate objectives. Recent pressure on Finland confirms a long-standing Soviet desire for military safeguards on Russia's northwest flank. In the south, Russia has nourished for a century and a half an ambition to control the Turkish Straits.⁷

On the surface, an escalation from a local campaign to a struggle between NATO and the Warsaw Pact would seem to place the West in a less favorable position. But to confirm this hypothesis requires a knowledge, first, of how the satellite troops would act in war and, second, of what forces and tactics the Soviet Union would use around Berlin. Since this knowledge can never be available in advance, a speculative analysis will have to suffice.

⁷James F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1948, p. 77.

In order to make our problem manageable, let us suppose that the satellite reaction takes one of three forms. They might: (1) fight tenaciously and effectively for the Soviet Union; (2) fight halfheartedly with low efficiency; or (3) revolt. In the first case, we should probably consider Soviet, satellite, and NATO units of equal strength as equal in fighting power also. In the north, there would be no question of the Soviet ability to surge into northern Norway or capture exposed objectives like Bornholm Island. In the south, though the numbers on each side would be much closer, the Communists should be able to marshal strength enough to take the offensive in sectors of their choice.⁸ Even in the second case, where troops of the vassal states fight with something less than wholehearted enthusiasm, they are still numerous enough to prevent the West from undertaking a general offensive in the Balkans.

⁸In 1959, satellite army strengths in Rumania and Bulgaria are said to have totalled approximately 410,000. The Turkish and Greek armies may aggregate a few thousand more. See Air Force Magazine, March 1960, pp. 41-42. However, it can be conservatively estimated that the Soviet Union has more than 100,000 permanently deployed in the Balkans and the Caucasus -- easily enough to tip the scales.

The third possibility -- open revolt -- does not proffer the salvation for the West that many optimists have implied. Hitherto satellite uprisings have occurred only in the face of dissidence and weakness among the ruling elite⁹ -- conditions that would probably not prevail in the opening days of a European limited war, particularly if the Soviet Union was on the offensive. Not that the West should discourage restiveness or sabotage. On the contrary, we should seek to manipulate unrest as a constant thorn in the side of the Russians. But we should guard ourselves against wishful thinking, for a successful satellite revolution is unlikely without a prior Soviet battlefield defeat. Fortunately, the mere possibility of revolt may cause the Kremlin almost as much concern (and divert almost as much military effort) as an actual uprising. To sum up, the West would do well to avoid strategic moves that depend for their success on diversionary aid from a satellite revolution.

While a war involving all or most of Europe would provide conditions favoring the Soviet conventional

⁹Paul Kecskemeti, The Unexpected Revolution, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1961, p. 149.

forces, the West's position would be only relatively better in a war confined to a compact area. The omnipresent Communist force preponderance (as well as the beleaguered position of the Berlin garrison) rules out any visions we might entertain of easy victory in a localized Berlin imbroglio. Only if the struggle were confined to the three Western Occupying Powers and the East Germans would the West be able to contemplate sustained offensive action -- and even then a substantial expeditionary force would be required to penetrate and hold open a corridor to the exposed city. Yet the fact that we may be over-matched on the local scene constitutes no justification per se for seeking hostilities elsewhere, and if enlarging the campaign seems likely to confront us with equal or greater odds it would be positively unwise to do so.

It appears, broadly speaking, that effective Western power would decline relative to that of the Communist bloc as the scale of the conflict increased from the theoretical minimum of the Occupying Powers versus the East Germans. If the Soviet Union intervened to help the East Germans (as it has promised to do) and the West

Germans came in on our side, the West would suffer a disadvantage. It cannot be proven by comparing total military forces that the next probable level of escalation (the Warsaw Pact against NATO) would worsen the predicament of the West. However, an inter-alliance conflict would offer the Communists other advantages besides manpower: they would retain the initiative on a larger scale; they could maneuver on interior lines; and they would profit from their more authoritarian command structure. Instead of engaging merely in a local conflict, the West might find that the superior enemy could attack at will in several places at once.

The West would stand to gain from a straight confrontation between the West Germans and the East Germans, but this line-up could hardly develop today, primarily because Bonn would not contemplate independent action, even if encouraged by her allies. That may not always be so, of course, since the West Germans tend to play a more active and independent role in fostering reunification and easing the plight of the captive East Germans. If unilateral West German action appears unlikely today, a major Western multilateral effort without West German

participation appears equally implausible. West Berlin is bound so intimately to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) by family, social, economic, and ideological ties that the pressure on Bonn to intervene might well become irresistible once battle had been joined by the Occupying Powers. In the remote hope that the belligerents could be restricted to the Western Occupying Powers and the East Germans, we should at least consider trying to keep the West Germans inactive until the Soviet Union commits itself to military action in ways more positive than the issuance of threats.

Once the Soviet Union has cast its lot with the East Germans, we should welcome West German assistance. Realistically we may suppose that the minimum contest would involve the Soviet Union and the East Germans on one side, and the U.S., U.K., France, and West Germany on the other. (The latter group will be referred to hereafter as the four major allies.)

Several military considerations suggest that the Western powers should attempt to confine hostilities to the four major allies, and that these belligerents, in turn, should restrict military activities to the vicinity of

Berlin. Though still unable to marshal enough troops to match numerically the Soviet and East German forces, the Allies would be able to use their best troops without a long-range deployment. The fighting area would be compact enough for both combat and support forces to concentrate in depth. Finally, using a select, cohesive grouping, the Allied authorities could employ a positive strategy instead of conceding initiative to the enemy.

Such an Allied strategy would also yield advantages to the Russians, but to a lesser degree. Some twenty Soviet divisions are already stationed in East Germany, and the best of these could be concentrated on a narrow front. But since the Communists possess numerical superiority wherever their forces are in contact with NATO, they would be less dependent on concentration and logistic support. Incidentally, the Soviet Union would have to use a high proportion of Russian troops around Berlin although they have shown a marked preference for having their limited wars fought by proxies.

One other factor should be considered in connection with operations in northern Germany: the flat terrain offers few geographical features for the defense to exploit.

But we must assume that fighting would take place in that region in any European war. The present purpose is only to inquire whether we should seek to confine or to expand the area of conflict.

Another argument, albeit a partly negative one, against voluntary Western expansion stems from the consequences of an early military setback. In limited war, the side which presents the other with a fait accompli obtains a critical advantage. If the side which seizes this initial advantage does not choose to follow up, it can sit tight and force the opponent to devise a means of restoring the status quo ante. The latter is then faced with three possible courses of action: attempt to recover without violating the limitations he has set for himself; expand the scale of warfare; or negotiate. If he negotiates from his weaker position, he must expect to forfeit spoils to the victor. Since, presumably, he cannot recover merely by using the resources which were insufficient to prevent the initial setback, his only profitable course is to intensify the conflict by committing larger resources and/or to expand the area of fighting. This process of reasoning leads some to argue that the West would be forced sooner or later to expand a local

war over Berlin to all the NATO Allies in any case, and therefore might as well call on them all from the start. This deduction, however, overlooks the distinction, which we have made above, between conflict intensification and territorial expansion. Escalation, it is true, may ultimately be required, but need this escalation take the form of increasing the number of participants? If we are militarily weaker on the flanks than we are in the center, expanding the area of conflict and the number of participants will merely mean greater losses and a more unfavorable settlement if we should later decide to negotiate. Escalation, if it is found imperative, should take the form of intensification of effort rather than an expansion of the belligerent area. Not only would an expansion of the conflict be unnecessary; it would be militarily inadvisable. The argument for the initial involvement of all the NATO Allies, therefore, falls to the ground.

V. MILITARY EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL COMBATANTS

To determine its probable contribution, we must look at the war-fighting capability of each potential contestant. The analysis entails more than a mere tabulation of force and equipment statistics. In spite of the character of nuclear weapons, the mobilization of conventional forces after the outbreak of hostilities will obviously continue to be important in conflicts where nuclear weapons are either banned or used only for tactical purposes. Mobilizable reserves, gross manpower, political unity, industrial potential, and even geophysical features could still be vital factors in a limited war of some duration, as they were in Korea. Bearing this in mind, the criteria for evaluating the potential for limited war of any of the NATO Allies may be set forth as follows:

1. Military Strength-in-Being in Relation to National Defense Tasks

Does the country have defense tasks (long frontiers, heavy urban concentrations, etc.) that are too great for its forces-in-being to perform, or does it possess a surplus of military strength that can be made available for other areas?

2. Strategic Position and Military Facilities

Is the country close to or remote from the prospective battlefield? Does it possess any military advantages, natural or man-made, that would outweigh the relative weakness of its forces-in-being and so confer on it a net positive value as a belligerent in a limited war?

3. Potential War-making Capacity

Does the country have a healthy economy that would allow it, in the conditions of limited war (i.e., forced draft but no strategic attacks), to produce necessities of war over and above her own mobilization requirements?

No elaborate tabulation of the smaller NATO countries according to the above criteria is required to show that most of them fail to qualify on all three counts. In the first test, where military forces are matched against national defense requirements, most of the Allies weigh in as borderline cases. Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal, which are rather distant from the probable points of attack, might be considered to have troop surpluses in the initial phase because they would not have to defend their own borders immediately. However, we should not expect much in the way of expeditionary forces from them. Demands of the home front multiply in times

of peril. There will be domestic demands for air defense forces, mine-laying and mine-sweeping units, training cadres, and internal security forces. The immediate need for mobilization and training for combat readiness will delay external deployment for some time.

Denmark's tiny military forces do not match her defense tasks, and the country presents an open invitation to invasion by land or water. The Allies would have to oppose such a flanking movement, using forces from outside Denmark. Norway, as we have seen, is in a similar situation.

On Europe's southern flank, Turkey and Greece maintain relatively large standing armies. The soldiers of both nations are rated among the most resolute in the Western camp. However, many troops are ill-equipped and neither country possesses the technical environment to accommodate the sophisticated instruments of modern war. The Turks and Greeks would be hard pressed to resist a determined drive by the combined Soviet and satellite forces facing them. Extension of hostilities to the Levant would present the Allies with another position of inferiority.

Canada and Italy emerge as the only two countries which could make positive troop contributions without

bringing unwholesome reverberations. Neither could be expected to deploy large numbers externally in the early stages. Canada has traditionally practiced austerity in maintaining standing forces. Italy is beset with a virile Communist Party organization.

If, as we surmise, little is to be gained by trying to squeeze troop contributions from the smaller allies, what other components of a war-making capacity can they contribute? What of their strategic location or vital facilities? We have already noted how potential forward operating bases for the strategic offensive lose their attractions in limited war. Possibly air transit staging bases would be more important in a war of attrition. Portugal, Iceland, and Canada own strategically located facilities that are essential for efficient trans-Atlantic air communications. But must the owner countries become belligerents before Americans can make use of these installations in support of a European conflict? We confront here another variant of the main question in limited war. Would the Soviet Union retaliate if we used the base facilities of friendly neutrals and, if so, what form would the retaliation take?



The Soviet Union might accept Allied use of the Azores, Keflavik, and Argentia without retaliating against Portugal, Iceland, or Canada. In the Korean War, United Nations aircraft used Japanese bases, and even launched combat operations from them, without reprisals from the North Koreans or Red Chinese. (The Communists, however, had little capacity to retaliate in this instance.¹⁰)

The Atlantic transit bases are far more remote from the battle zone than were the Japanese bases from Korea, and there is no intention to use them for combat purposes. There are few symmetrical measures which the USSR could take that would embarrass the West. We would normally expect the Soviet Union to be using neutral bases and transport facilities behind its battle zone (e.g., in Poland or Czechoslovakia), so that retaliation in the form of expanded use of neutral bases would not be a serious problem to the West. The risk remains that the enemy might attack the trans-Atlantic air bases themselves by submarine or long-range aircraft, but this appears a risk worth accepting to obtain the use of these important facilities. Portugal, Iceland, and Canada need not go to

¹⁰ Allen S. Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960, p. 156.

war in the first instance to permit air transport operations through their bases in support of a European conflict. Later, of course, they might be compelled to become belligerents, at least in a defensive role outside Europe, if the Communists took forceful measures to interfere with this traffic.¹¹

One other type of strategic possession presents a poser to the allied planner: critical waterways. The prospect of applying pressure on the Soviet Union by closing the Turkish or Danish Straits appeals to militant strategists. Since both these narrows are considered to be international waterways -- one by convention and one by comity -- denial of their use to merchantmen in peacetime would certainly be considered a hostile act. It may be assumed that the Soviet Union would retaliate against the littoral state for a discriminatory blockade, and that a state of war would result. The arguments against expansion of the area of conflict, therefore, also apply to

¹¹ Experience has shown that friendly neutrals do not automatically approve our requests for favors (e.g., refusal of some NATO nations to grant the U.S. immediate overflight and refueling rights for combat troops en route to Lebanon in 1958). Some form of quid pro quo may be required, possibly in the form of ceding a measure of control over our belligerent action. For a lucid description of

a policy of denying the use of the narrows to Soviet vessels in the context of a local war over Berlin.

Finally, we must consider the economic and industrial aspects of the war-making potential of the Allies. Turkey, Greece, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Portugal, and Italy become distinct liabilities when we compare their requirements for mobilization with their productive capacity. Even Belgium and the Netherlands appear marginal. Both of them have healthy but modest industrial economies that could support increased allocations for defense purposes. But mobilization for war would disturb the industrial and economic pattern, even if it eventually stimulated increased production. The transition would generate competing demands for men and equipment between the armed forces and the industrialists. The net result could be a reduction in war materiel available for export for at least the first year of the war. If we seek expeditious material assistance from the smaller allies, we must discourage them from mobilizing, as they cannot do

this point and others connected with friendly support in limited war, see H. A. DeWeerd, J. W. Ellis, Jr., A. L. George, T. E. Greene, and F. M. Sallagar, Bilateral Nuclear Limited War: An Analysis of its Conditions and Problems (U), The RAND Corporation, RM-2546, February 1960, Secret, pp. 63-69.

this and manufacture for export at the same time. There is the slight risk that the Soviet Union would not accept such collusion between belligerent and nonbelligerent NATO members and would attack the latter. However, the right of individuals to trade with belligerents seems well established under the rules of international law. The Soviet Union took no pains to disguise its massive provisioning of the North Korean forces, although it did scrupulously avoid open complicity in a combatant role.

With the exception of Canada, which qualifies on all three counts as a desirable belligerent ally, the disadvantages of having the smaller NATO allies as active belligerents in a limited war would outweigh the benefits in terms of concrete military effectiveness.

VI. NONMILITARY CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING
THE NUMBER OF COMBATANTS

Among the noteworthy accomplishments of NATO must be ranked the construction of an ingenious organization for developing and carrying out NATO policy. Excluding for a moment the decision-making process, one must admire the skillful invention which co-ordinates the efforts of a group of Davids and Goliaths who all rank as peers. We are particularly interested here in that portion of the hierarchy which administers military affairs in Central Europe: that is, SHAPE and its subordinate headquarters. If the four major allies acted alone, would they have to forego the use of these established staffs and, even more important, their facilities and communications networks? Both the fighting allies and the rest of the NATO membership would want to emphasize the distinction between the combatant group and the nonbelligerent NATO. A separate chain of command appears almost mandatory. Need this separation mean the dissolution of NATO as an alliance? Not necessarily! Other individual and joint ventures have taken place on the periphery of Europe, using troops previously assigned to NATO, without shattering the coalition (Lebanon and Suez). Even in the situation

visualized here, some troops of the four major allies would remain in France and southern Germany under NATO command. The novel complication lies in the fact that combat would take place for the first time in NATO territory, where there is already an international commander and a headquarters to carry out Alliance responsibilities. Obviously, if the arrangement is to work without friction, there can be but one authority responsible for the military campaign. Since an independent expeditionary force will be doing the fighting, the NATO commander should be superseded in the combat zone by the officer in charge of the belligerent troops.

A crucial question would be whether NATO or the four major allies should have use of the established staffs and facilities (exclusive of SHAPE, which must remain attached to NATO, for it functions as the heart of the alliance and its province extends far beyond Central Europe). Obviously, the expeditionary forces have a compelling need for a tested organization. A well-defined command structure, with clear statements of authority and responsibility, represents far more than military window dressing. Complicated jurisdictional arrangements, particularly among military services of different countries, take time and patience to

develop. The expeditionary forces should not be additionally handicapped by having to negotiate new arrangements while under fire.

There seems to be no practical reason why the four major allies should not expropriate the existing NATO command chain in Central Europe. All physical facilities are located in France or Germany. The great majority of the personnel who man the headquarters below SHAPE and the bulk of the tactical troops they control are furnished by the four major allies. SHAPE, if not required to take an active part in the struggle, could easily erect a skeleton command network to control the alerted units in Central Europe that remained assigned to NATO. This proposal, which amounts to converting five operational international headquarters¹² to non-NATO status, may startle the reader at first glance, but the action would not violate any legal contract or ethical obligation. The arrangement would eliminate much of the initial discomposure that would result if the military forces of the four major allies were required

¹²The organizations are Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCE), Central Army Group, Northern Army Group, 4th Allied Tactical Air Force, 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force. All other headquarters in Central Europe are national.

to operate under commanders with unreconciled terms of reference.

It has been suggested that West German troops could not operate outside the bounds of NATO. The Germans have tried to integrate their forces irrevocably into the NATO framework, primarily to avoid accusations that they could be used for other than alliance purposes. Has this propensity to place all their forces under NATO command destroyed the German ability to use their troops independently, either alone or as part of a group? More precisely, would treaty commitments prohibit such diversions?

Unquestionably the Germans retain enough control over their military formations to employ them outside the NATO command structure. They have long advocated an international logistics network within NATO which, if realized, would make it extremely difficult for national forces to fight without the support of a corporate service agency. But integration agreements have lagged behind German aspirations. Logistical and administrative support remains a national responsibility, and the Germans must provide for their own troops. The only service which NATO has performed up to the present for the FRG is the higher staff

planning and direction, and combined planning and direction do not descend below the Army Group and Tactical Air Force level. Although some improvisation would be required initially, the task of operating German ground units up to the Corps level (or Wing level in the German Air Force) outside NATO introduces no formidable obstacle.

As far as legal restrictions are concerned, Germany seems to have the same status as any other member of the Alliance, but for the peculiar stipulations in the Western European Union agreement that affect mainly the manufacture of war munitions. The author can find no stipulation in any document that would place special constraints on the employment of German forces. The general section of the "Resolution to Implement Section IV of the Final Act of the London Conference,"¹³ designating what forces will be assigned to NATO command, states that:

The North Atlantic Council:

* * * * *

4. Decides that all forces of member nations stationed in the area of the Allied Command Europe shall be placed under the authority

¹³Lord Ismay, op. cit., p. 261.

of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe or other appropriate NATO Command and under the direction of the NATO military authorities with the exception of those forces intended for the defence of overseas territories and other forces which the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has recognized or will recognize as suitable to remain under national command.

5. ...Thereafter, if any changes are proposed [in commitment of forces to NATO], the North Atlantic Council action on the NATO Annual Review will constitute recognition as to the suitability and size of forces to be placed under the authority of the appropriate NATO Command and those to be retained under national command.

* * * * *

7. Agrees...that... (c) forces under the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and within the area of Allied Command Europe shall not be redeployed or used operationally within that area without the consent of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, subject to political guidance furnished by the North Atlantic Council, when appropriate, through normal channels. [Emphasis supplied.]

In the absence of secret protocols (of which there is no evidence), Germany is bound by the same restrictions that apply to the other three major allies. The procedure by which a member nation may reserve forces for national use consists of a notification in the Annual Review Country Reply and a pro forma approval by the Council. Hence, one may suppose that the decision to

leave all German forces under NATO command was a voluntary one on the part of the FRG. Certainly France has retained the freedom to keep more troops under national command than can be justified by colonial exigencies. In time of crisis, the Germans, like the Americans, British, and French, need only apply to the Supreme Commander for permission to redeploy and operate their forces independently. In view of the written agreement on voluntary NATO contributions and the practice followed down to the present, SACEUR and the Council could hardly refuse the request.

Turning now to the matter of morale, one detects a tendency to overrate the exhilarating effect within the alliance and among the uncommitted nations of a community effort. The moralist argues that a NATO-wide reaction to pressure in Berlin would arouse global support from the righteous. He is inclined to overlook the pragmatic nature of neutral reactions. Moreover, there is a subtle distinction between "collective security" and "collective defense."¹⁴ A NATO expedition to relieve Berlin, for

¹⁴ For an enlightening differentiation of the two "collective" systems, see Arnold Wolfers, Alliance Policy in the Cold War, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1959, p. 50.

example, could not be equated to United Nations action in Korea. NATO, clearly designed to protect a particular group against a known enemy, must be defined as a regional pact for "collective defense." The United Nations, in so far as it contemplates military enterprises, conceives of "collective security" as a worldwide reaction against any nation or group identified by the Security Council as "aggressors." Unless the Council declares an act of aggression to have been committed, the NATO expedition loses its significance as an international crusade.

While the uncommitted nations might view the failure of NATO to act in unison as demonstrating a lack of conviction, these nations, more concerned to prevent global nuclear war than to determine the righteousness of either side's cause, would applaud any action by the Alliance or its members that might restrict the scope of hostilities. Indeed the morale of the Alliance itself might gain from the recognition that everything was being done to hold down the scale of the war. Some nations would gladly express opposition to Soviet encroachments, as long as

they could do so without becoming actively involved in the war.¹⁵

The recurrent Allied disputes on how to approach negotiations with the Soviet Union aptly illustrate the problem of securing accord among the members of NATO. While this difficulty may also arise among the four major allies, their disagreements are more likely to concern the tactics of how to meet specific problems than the deeper emotions that make for factiousness in the grand coalition. Furthermore, the relative intimacy of four-power deliberations offers more opportunity for resolution through compromise than is possible in the larger body.

The United States is obliged to consult with its allies about projected actions that would affect their vital interests, as the Berlin maneuvers would; it is not obliged to secure their approval. The allies are not bound to join us in actions about which we have informed them in advance. Although our allies undoubtedly have an interest in the way we handle the Berlin situation, their

¹⁵ Dr. J. J. Robbins, in analyzing Danish attitudes, lists as one of the prime factors limiting the Danish defense effort: "An earnest desire on the part of many Danes to stand aside from great-power politics...."

concern hardly extends to an insistence on participating in active operations. With the smaller allies as interested parties, the NATO Council could still debate the actions of the four major allies and offer suggestions and criticisms as they did in the Lebanon episode. But the Council would have the power neither to veto the plans of the four major allies nor to delay action until all its members were unanimous. The NATO charter contains no restriction, even implicit, to prohibit the separate action of a small group of allies. In fact, the emphasis of the treaty is in quite the opposite direction: that of insuring that no member can be drawn into hostilities against his will.

VII. THE TERRITORIAL LIMITATION AS IT IS AFFECTED
BY OTHER ASPECTS OF CONFLICT CONTROL

The four main areas in which it is generally agreed that war may be limited (see above, pp. 6 ff.) are: the objective, the method of fighting, the level of violence, and physical boundaries. The scope of this paper does not permit a full discussion of each category, but we cannot avoid a glance at how the criteria for selecting the optimum group of combatants are affected by changes in the other limitations.

Obviously, the over-all objective will affect the combination of allies to be used in the war effort. The foregoing discussion suggests that even substantial increases in the scope of Allied aims after war had begun would not call for any wholesale involvement of the weaker allies, unless the objective became one that could only be achieved by total war. If the desire to keep the war limited is an overriding objective, the arguments in favor of a small, efficient group of belligerents will remain valid.

The method of fighting and the level of violence tend to be two sides of one coin. Together they include tactics, strength of fighting forces, and weapons. We must take

care to evaluate these factors in the light of possible symmetrical retaliation. One can postulate preferential tactics for the West -- for example, a vigorous tactical air interdiction campaign to assist a surface penetration to Berlin -- that might redound to our disadvantage if similar tactics were used in retaliation by the Communists. This consideration applies even more strongly to the strength of fighting contingents committed to the battlefield, for we must expect that the Communists could match any conventional task force that the Allies could muster in the Berlin vicinity.

The recognition that the West stands little chance of victory if limitations on the scale of warfare are highly restrictive leads many to conclude that the West will be forced to intensify the war effort in order to avoid defeat. It is not intended here to argue the contrary, for no one can accurately foretell at what point the process of escalation may level off -- if, indeed, stabilization is possible at all. This study does argue, however, that the four major allies would not gain, and might lose, by bringing in the smaller Western allies as a means of increasing the intensity of their war effort. Moreover,

without an expansion of the territorial limits of belligerency, the four major allies possess all the potential necessary to prosecute a conflict of any intensity up to (and including) a general war.

Many strategists argue persuasively that raising the tension level by introducing atomic weapons would exert a psychological deterrent effect on the Russians that might be the only means of holding them at bay. A less numerous group of strategists accords a military (as well as psychological) advantage to the West through the introduction of atomic weapons. Both schools of thought expect that the value of these advantages would mount as the level of violence approached that of general war. These hypotheses have been reinforced by recent public statements of defense officials which virtually proclaim the present existence of a substantial American strategic nuclear superiority. If the West may really hope for a psychological or military advantage from employing nuclear weapons, the tactical weapons delivered by the smaller allies on the flanks would add nothing significant to the larger weapons delivered by the Western nuclear powers from their positions in Central Europe.

The four major allies need not activate the NATO alliance as a pre-condition for using nuclear weapons. If, however, prior political commitments have been made to some common-sharing formula that would require unanimous consent, the four major allies would obviously have less freedom of action.

The limitation on physical boundaries directly determines the number of participating nations. Advocates of Western resistance by conventional military means to Communist encroachments in the Berlin area will acknowledge, when pressed, that they visualize a local war of quite modest territorial dimensions. Beyond this point opinions vary, for conspicuous lines of demarcation do not suggest themselves. Few analysts, if any, conceive of an associated tactical air war that would include, say, enemy attacks on airfields or ports west of the Rhine, even with "iron" bombs. Most observers refuse to contemplate Communist penetration of West Germany in any form, since they regard this as ground for escalation to general war. If the Central European battle were extended beyond the Berlin corridors, however, and still kept limited in intensity, it could still be waged more efficiently by the four major allies than by the whole Alliance.

If any of the Western allies should opt to exceed the minimum limitation in any of the four major categories, their action might unilaterally force a change in the composition of the Western fighting syndicate. This possibility, however, does not invalidate our conclusion that the preferred team for handling a Berlin flare-up should include only the four major allies.

VIII. SOME OBJECTIONS ANTICIPATED

If military considerations, as we have concluded, argue so strongly against enlarging a local conflict, why does the Western approach now stress a corporate NATO commitment to defend Berlin? Two understandable attitudes are responsible. First, until recently few officials believed hostilities could be limited to Berlin, the access corridors, or even Germany, no matter how elaborate the precautions we might take. They have been reluctant to design a strategy for so apparently remote a possibility. Second, since the Western allies (with the exception of the U.S.) are individually no match for the Soviets, their resistance to blackmail and aggression has been made effective only through the deterrent of an alliance committed to an automatic and united response. There is a natural reluctance to imply a willingness to fight with something less than the total alliance for fear it would weaken the deterrent.

These two formidable arguments in favor of Allied solidarity would probably outweigh the military advantages of using only the four major allies if we had to make a simple choice between one extreme and the other. But, it is fair to ask, must we throw away all opportunities to confine hostilities,

merely because the chance of success is slight? Before we do so, we should determine as far as we can how far the Soviet Union is willing to exercise self-restraint. On the other hand, it is true, we must also reckon with whatever dangers might arise if we restrict ourselves initially and the war spreads anyway.

Of course, we could force Moscow to expand the area of military action and furnish another instance of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we bring in the full NATO alliance on our side, they will certainly invoke the Warsaw Pact. But with encouragement rather than provocation, there remains a possibility that the Soviet Union will be willing to hobble its efforts if we do. An obvious way to encourage Soviet restraint is to announce that we would meet a serious extension of the scope of hostilities with strategic reprisals. Many believe that such a threat would be more effective than the one which failed to deter the initial incident leading to hostilities, because both sides would be poised and even more aware than before of the thermonuclear war risk.

Some may argue that, by signifying our determination to confine the fighting to a certain locality, we would weaken the basic strategic deterrent warning against any

provocative enemy action. The point is well taken. However, if we imply an intention to fight a purely conventional war in Europe to defend Berlin (which we now seem to be doing), no further disadvantage can be suffered from indicating that we have no intention of fighting a widespread war all over the continent. We can carry the strategic deterrent into the new context by insisting that hostilities be confined to the Berlin area as the only alternative to global nuclear war.

What do we stand to lose if Moscow refuses to heed our warnings and orders a general assault all along the Iron Curtain? Physically, NATO would face no worse a predicament than if the Allies had plunged immediately into war of their own volition. If opening hostilities were confined to Germany, Western tacticians would have to guard against denuding inactive sectors of the Communist Bloc frontier. The temptation to concentrate would be greatest in the case of an alliance-wide response which members expected to be confined to the Berlin environs because, in that event, pressure would build up to send an all-inclusive expeditionary force with contingents from each ally to the immediate seat of trouble. While a localized four-power effort might also to some extent weaken defense dispositions

against a general assault, we can expect that the NATO commander would oppose excessive diversions from his alert forces in the inactive sectors. The conflict of interest in this respect between the field commander and the NATO commander might lead to occasional acrimony, but it would tend to secure a proper balance in troop allocations.

After an opening clash in the Berlin area, there might be isolated Soviet probes in other sectors. These would doubtless fall short of the kind of provocation that would justify massive nuclear retaliation in the eyes of the West. Yet the Allies would lose face as well as territory if they failed to counter a Soviet attack. Our failure to apply some effective form of punishment (possibly for a second time, if the Soviets had deliberately provoked the initial conflict in the face of our strategic threats), would open a schism in allied strategic councils whose reverberations could not fail to break out into public debate. This sequence of events need not be entirely to our disadvantage. The evidence that we were wavering between a local and a strategic reaction, and that we were deeply chagrined by the contemptuous Soviet violation, might have a restraining influence which could be engendered in no other way. If Moscow really wished that the war

remain limited and were forced to recognize that its license to transgress with impunity had expired, it might be influenced not to pursue to its conclusion an action about which the Soviet leaders had previously felt no compunction. Would they risk inflicting a defeat so humiliating that our only recourse was resort to nuclear war?

If the Russians retain a conventional superiority all along the NATO border, we would do well to keep them worried about pushing us over the brink into nuclear war. A Western strategy designed to restrict the locus of hostilities would not be invalidated by the prospect of Soviet expansion of the area of fighting after its outbreak. In fact, a Soviet decision to enlarge the war area could conceivably place us in a better deterrent position than if we had plunged directly into war as a united alliance. As long as the Soviet Union refrains from attacking the Western Allies simultaneously, the entry of NATO as a unit constitutes an important step in the escalation process which we should not voluntarily ascend without cause or compensation. In the event the Soviet Union rather than the West initiated the involvement of all the NATO countries, and should the consequences be thought only slightly graver than if we had brought in NATO ourselves, perhaps we can accept that risk for the sake of retaining some degree of control over the scale of hostilities.

Would the prior disclosure of our intention to defend Berlin through a small group of the most powerful NATO Allies destroy the deterrent effect of our heretofore united front? The West could pretend a solidarity during the threatening period and then fight with only those who make up the strongest combatant team. But such a policy vitiates the basic aim of keeping the war limited, since the scale of the enemy's initial attack will be predicated upon what we have told him about the magnitude of our response. In other words, the scale and direction of the attack might force us to bring in all of NATO from the start anyway. Limited war is only possible if both sides tacitly agree to restrain themselves, and such restraint is not compatible with drastic unilateral changes in strategy.

If the West decides to pursue a policy of sealing off a local Berlin action, it will vastly improve its chances of confining the struggle by embarking well in advance on a calculated campaign of publicity designed to condition Moscow (and ourselves) to follow such a course. But proclamations alone will not suffice. We must also prepare now to keep hostilities under control in the event of a future emergency. Specific planning exceeds the scope of this paper, but one general observation is in

order. The erstwhile tendency to view most incidents as leading inevitably to large-scale nuclear war dispensed with the need to arrange for lesser contingencies. Quite correctly, military leaders have always believed that complicated alternate plans for numerous contingencies cause confusion among the operating units. As long as policy required an automatic NATO nuclear response to all but the most insignificant incidents, one could assume that a single basic plan was adequate for any serious emergency. But if a deliberate effort is to be made to limit hostilities, a variety of contingency plans will be needed on the assumption that friction could be generated in a number of ways. A master plan should, of course, envisage the possibility that NATO will ultimately be required to resort to nuclear war. But neither the political commitments nor the military plans of the Allies should be bound to the one prospect of a NATO alliance response. We should recall the dilemma that faced the Kaiser in 1914 when he wanted to threaten only Russia, but was told that Germany must mobilize simultaneously against France, for a two-front war was the only circumstance provided for in the plans of the German General Staff.¹⁶

¹⁶History teaches, moreover, that planning neglect by either side can wreck good intentions and lead to unwanted

If we make it clear that we intend to fight a war over Berlin with selected contestants, would we encourage the Kremlin to extend its military ambitions? There is no reason to assume that the Russians are intimidated by the prospect of facing Italy or Greece or Portugal in a war of Soviet choosing. The adherence of the smaller Western allies to NATO affects Moscow's plans only in so far as it facilitates Western strategic retaliation, raises the cost of Soviet blackmail or aggression against a single NATO member, or enhances the Allied defense in a local war.

As we have noted, the likelihood and outcome of a Western retaliatory strategic attack do not hinge on whether NATO responds collectively to Soviet aggression. The specter of SAC will be just as menacing whether the four major allies or NATO as a whole enter the struggle over Berlin.

escalation. Just previous to the Kaiser's experience, Tsar Nicholas II was confronted with a similar predicament. When he directed that Russian warlike activities be confined to demonstrations of strength against Austria alone, consternation ensued. "The Tsar's shift of orders threw the Russian Chief of Staff and the Russian War Minister into a panic. They had a detailed plan for general mobilization but not for such a partial mobilization as the Tsar now contemplated...." By the next day, his advisors having convinced him that some deterrent action was necessary, the Tsar reluctantly agreed to the only alternative to inaction -- general mobilization. Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe, Vol. II, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1936, p. 778.

We cannot forecast how the Soviet planner would evaluate the local defense implications of a Western decision to exclude the minor NATO Allies. In all probability he would conclude, as we have, that Western efforts will be more efficient if conducted by a selected group of the most powerful Allies. If the Soviet planner thinks in this way, then a Western prearrangement for action by the major allies only could just as easily enhance the over-all deterrent posture as erode it.

At their meeting of December 1961, the foreign ministers of all the NATO countries reaffirmed their previous statement of December 1958 in these words:

[The Council] recalls the responsibilities which each member state has assumed in regard to the security and welfare of Berlin, and the maintenance of the position of the Three Powers in that city.¹⁷

The "responsibilities" were not enumerated, but the impression deliberately created by this pronouncement was one of unflinching resolve to act as an alliance.

Naturally, we would not wish to abandon completely the principle of one for all and all for one, but it would perhaps redound to our advantage to keep the Russians guessing

¹⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, The NATO Handbook, Bosch-Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1959, p. 39.

about our contingency plans. We might even take advantage of an inherent Western characteristic -- inconsistency -- to achieve that end. We have used this procedure before without embarrassment, most notably in the last Berlin predicament. President Eisenhower, in 1959, while indicating no diminution of our resolve to stay in Berlin, asserted that he would not contemplate a conventional war in Europe and that a nuclear war to free Berlin would be "self-defeating."¹⁸ The statement, which ruled out the only three active responses to Soviet provocation (retreat, conventional war, and nuclear war), was intended to emphasize the need for negotiation, but, in actuality, by eliminating all three with equal casualness, the President committed the U.S. to no particular course. The further information that our final course would depend on decisions which had not then been made probably planted some doubts in the minds of the Soviet leaders that they were free to do as they liked with impunity. A combination of Soviet uncertainty and Western flexibility makes for an environment favorable to Western initiatives. It is a state of affairs that may be fostered by inconsistencies in our Cold War conduct, whether intended or not.

¹⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, New York Times, March 12, 1959, p. 12.

IX. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

Our present national policy (in so far as it can be deduced from exoteric evidence) prescribes an initial attempt to limit a "hot" war over Berlin. This study concludes that, as one of the means to ensure limitation, the West could confine the fighting coalition to only a few of the more powerful Allies, namely the U.S., the U.K., France, and West Germany, designated herein as the four major allies.

Different criteria should be used for selecting limited-war partners than for choosing general-war allies. Any European country other than Britain, France, and West Germany would be unable to contribute enough military assistance in a local Berlin war to outweigh the liabilities and risks which the belligerent status of that country would bring to the fighting coalition. The less tangible political and psychological benefits of having the smaller NATO members as belligerents do not appear significantly to outweigh the contributions which the same nations could make as benevolent neutrals.

Should the policy here suggested replace that of an automatic and united military rebuff to Soviet provocation in Europe, families of contingency plans, each with a prominent regard for preventing escalation, would take

their place in the Western repertoire of possible responses. The distinction between general and limited war preparations would become clearer and more meaningful, allowing the smaller Allies in particular to improve their defense programs.

Some preparations -- such as the formation of a special command structure and arrangements for the use of certain NATO facilities by the fighting group -- would be publicized as a demonstration of the war-making capacity of the selective coalition.

Some contend that the indication of an intention to respond to provocation with only a partial NATO contingent would lower the Soviet estimate of our deterrent capability. But the Soviet Union might well recognize the enhanced efficiency of a military campaign limited to the four major allies.

Present NATO policy -- designed to convince the Soviet Union of our determination to resist any aggression as an indivisible alliance -- implies a scale of response to minor aggression that may be in excess of what is necessary or appropriate. It eliminates an important step in escalation by prescribing it in advance, and thus puts the initial clash on a plane closer to all-out war. It exposes the

weakest links in the NATO chain to Soviet attack, a needless risk if hostilities can in fact be confined to Central Europe.

We need not turn suddenly from an exclusive concentration on convincing the Russians of NATO's monolithic solidarity to the other extreme of announcing our exclusive commitment to a selective response. We can suggest openly that either policy might be appropriate depending on the contingency. In our psychological campaign, we should stress both the military merits of a selective response and the role of the new policy as evidence of our genuine desire to keep a European war limited as far as Soviet behavior will allow.